

Mar 01

## Parco Burcina Felice Piacenza



The history, fauna and flora of the Parco Burcina Felice Piacenza.

The Parco Burcina Felice Piacenza is situated just north of the nearby town of Biella, in the Northern Italian region of Piemonte. The park is a historical garden situated in the territory of the municipalities of Biella and Pollone, on the homonymous "Brik Burcina", a small hill close to the Prealp Biellesi.

The park originated in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century when its creator Giovanni Piacenza, between the period of 1811 and 1833, began to purchase various segments of land in the lower parts of the southern and western slopes, to plant Sequoia trees, near the lake, Atlas Cedar trees and many White Pines further upstream close to what would become the park's headquarters and many other types of plants all over, beautifying the park.

His son Felice Piacenza, which the park was later named for, worked tirelessly everyday for more than 50 years, to purchase new land, sketch roads, trails and plant trees which created the truly spectacular Rhododendrons valley, which enchants the many visitors to the park every mid-June.

One of the most surprising and astonishing elements of the park is that the industrialist Felice did not make use of any landscape architects, but instead chose to design and create the park himself.

The consequences of this, is that the park offers more than just a botanical aspect. A romantic small lake, the woods that surround the meadow, the Beech tree woods that make up the Pian Plá, the valley of Rhododendrons, the Mediterranean area and the view of the mountains make the park far more interesting than a plain and functionally designed botanical garden.

Felice's son Enzo who became director of the park in 1892 created the new entrance to the park in 1950 18 years before retiring in 1968. The new entrance was planned and designed according to Enzo's father Felice's wishes by the Florentine architect Petro Porcinai and was the defining characteristic of Enzo's reign as director of the park.

During the last 15 years of Enzo's life, he invited to Burcina, the most famous botanists Europe had to offer, to help him in replanting the several areas of the park which were destroyed by the Föhn wind in February 1967. This was to be his last gift to the park and upon his death was replaced as director by his son Guido, who to this day remains director of the park and who was responsible for renaming it Parco Burcina Felice Piacenza in honour of his late, grandfather.

In 1934 the municipality of Biella took ownership of the park which enlarged it to the 57 hectares it is now and in 1980 the regional law no29 was drawn up which allowed for the establishment of the Special Nature Reserve of Burcina Felice Piacenza which Enzo Piacenza had a big part in creating and was then allowed to name the park after his grandfather.

The Regione Piemonte (regional municipality) pays a great amount of attention to the park, investing a lot into its new planting activities, the apple orchard, a bar-restaurant and the control of the meteoric waters to name a few. The new park headquarters has been provided with a fully functioning didactic hall complete with audiovisual and multimedia material, an optical microscope, stuffed animal exhibits and a library consisting of over 1000 volumes dedicated to naturalistic and environmental issues.

The Park Authority has also created an interesting collection of wood samples for both educational and scientific purposes of both the barks and wedges of the many different botanical essences, which unfortunately often get mixed up and neglected.

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